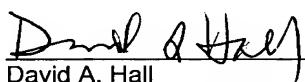


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PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT**

In view of the amendments and above remarks, entry of the amendments and examination of the application on the merits are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,  
HELLER EHRLMAN WHITE & McAULIFFE LLP

By:   
David A. Hall  
Registration No. 32,233

Attorney Docket No. 38203-6079

**Address all correspondence to:**

David A. Hall  
HELLER EHRLMAN WHITE & McAULIFFE LLP  
4350 La Jolla Village Drive, Suite 600  
San Diego, CA 92122-1246  
Telephone: (858) 450-8400 Facsimile: (858) 587-5360  
EMAIL: dhall@hewm.com



IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Applicant: MCARTHUR, et al.

Serial No.: 10/039,426

Conf. No.: 8965

Filed: January 4, 2002

For: *METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR  
PROPER ORDERING OF  
REGISTRATION DATA*

Art Unit: 2851

Examiner: Unassigned

**ATTACHMENT TO THE PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT  
MARKED UP PARAGRAPHS AND CLAIMS (37 CFR §1.121)**

**IN THE SPECIFICATION:**

Please amend the specification as follows:

**Please amend the paragraph on page 3, lines 3-19, as follows:**

Figure 5(a) shows a typical overlay displacement vector 502 representing the x-shift and y-shift vector overlay error associated with a [miss-aligned]misaligned frame-in-frame alignment attribute. In some cases the overlay error can be measured using special in-situ exposure tool metrology See Direct-referencing automatic two-points reticle-to-wafer alignment using a projection column servo system, *supra*. Many commercial software packages exist (see A Computer Aided Engineering Workstation for Registration Control, E. McFadden, C. Ausschnitt, SPIE Vol. 1087, 255:266 1989; Matching of Multiple Wafer Steppers for 0.35 Micron Lithography using Advanced Optimization Schemes, M. van den Brink, et al., SPIE Vol. 1926, 189:207, 1993, (hereinafter Klass II)) that model and statistically determine the relative magnitude of the systematic and random inter-field and intra-field error components for the purpose of process control, projection lens adjustment, wafer stage calibration, and exposure tool set-up. Other methods such as described in U.S. Patent No. 5,978,085 and U.S. Patent No. 5,828,455 both

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entitled "APPARATUS, METHOD OF MEASUREMENT, AND METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS FOR CORRECTION OF OPTICAL SYSTEM" to Adlai Smith, Bruce McArthur, and Robert Hunter, and both incorporated in their entirety herein, use overlay techniques to determine the lens aberrations of the photolithographic exposure tool or machine.

**Please amend the paragraph on page 4, lines 6-16, as follows:**

For some applications, such as very high rate overlay sampling on semiconductor production wafers, overlay registration results are not that sensitive to the exact sampling in terms of target position and other parameters. For example, a typical semiconductor manufacturing facility might, for purposes of process control, monitor the day to day alignment accuracy of an photolithographic tool by measuring a small number of overlay targets on a small group of production wafers, see for example Figures 14(a), 14(b), 14(c) and 15(b). See Semiconductor Pattern Overlay, N. Sullivan, SPIE Critical Reviews Vol. CR52, 160:188; Super Sparse Overlay Sampling Plans: An Evaluation of Methods and Algorithms for Optimizing Overlay Quality Control and Metrology Tool Throughput, J. Pellegrini, SPIE Vol. 3677, 72:82, 36220.

**Please amend the paragraph on page 8, lines 5-6, as follows:**

[Figure 5(b) is]Figures 5(b1) - 5(b4) are a schematic diagram showing typical overlay errors associated with prior art systems.

**Please amend the paragraph on page 9, lines 2-3, as follows:**

[Figure 14 is]Figures 14(a) - 14(c) are a schematic showing a prior art overlay exposure patterns for process monitoring and stepper qualification.

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**Please amend the paragraph on page 11, lines 14-22, as follows:**

Conventional methods for collecting overlay data include programming an overlay tool with a set of software instructions that instruct the overlay tool to measure the alignment attributes or overlay targets in a distinct order, see for example Figures 14(a), 14(b), 14(c), 15(a), 15(b), and 15(c). The labeling and identification of the overlay output data usually depends on the type of overlay tool used to measure the alignment attributes. For example, the KLA 5100 series of tools use a complicated coding system that requires a fair degree of interpretation to decode the output data. See KLA 5105 overlay brochure, *supra*; KLA 5200 overlay brochure, *supra*. Other tools, like the BioRad Quaestor-Q7 simply label the output data by position, matching each registration error to its unique field point.

**Please amend the paragraph on page 12, lines 1-18, as follows:**

Most overlay tools are programmed to measure the alignment attributes in close proximity of many other similar looking features. Typically, overlay tools use an optical recognition routine to identify each alignment attribute just prior to measurement. Sometimes, the optical recognition system can read the wrong alignment attribute or a similar looking feature in a systematic way. If it is simply assumed that the overlay tool has identified the correct alignment attribute and one proceeds to use the program for production measurements, the data can become corrupt. In addition, many times the alignment attributes and wafer exposure patterns are symmetric with respect to the notch of the wafer, as illustrated in [Figure 14] Figures 14(a), 14(b) and 14(c). The symmetry can cause confusion when trying to set-up and debug the overlay machine instructions to read the alignment attributes in a unique order. For most production applications, unorganized, missing and slightly corrupt overlay data can be accounted for. For example, most production overlay routines measure the alignment attributes wafer-to-wafer and use statistical techniques to determine the average amount of overlay error associated with the production lot as a whole, thus missing and unorganized overlay data is

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accounted for statistically. While averaging data reduces the effect of erroneously identified data points, averaging data is not desirable because it can reduce the accuracy of the result. It is therefore desirable to have a technique that can eliminate these errors.

**Please amend the paragraphs on page 18, line 22 through page 20, line 3, as follows:**

A fourth encoding scheme example can be used to monitor the performance of the overlay tool in regards to special photolithographic process induced effects that corrupt the overlay data in a unique way. Typically, a critical dimension (CD) diminution in an "egg crate" structure across each field point is observed, see for example [Figure 5(b)]Figures 5(b1), 5(b2), 5(b3) and 5(b4). If the overlay job deck does not account for these process induced CD variations the overlay tool might read incorrectly as it steps target to target across a given field point array. In particular, instead of measuring the offsets relative to the egg-crate centerline, we may be measuring it relative to the edges which when combined with the above-mentioned CD variation will lead to erroneous results. To identify and correct these problems the reticle pattern is deviated by forcing the CDs of the outer frame structures to decrease as a function of the position within the field point array according to equations (6) and (7), and illustrated in Figure 5(a). For this encoding scheme the CDs of the horizontal and vertical bars that define the outer frame structure are modified, for example reduced, as a function of the position across the field point in ~10nm steps.

The CD diminution effect usually shows up as the wrong result in the overlay data for those overlay tools/jobs that are sensitive to this particular CD variation, e.g. overlay jobs that have been incorrectly set up. Thus as illustrated in Figure 5(c), an inner box is perfectly centered (offset=0) between two lines with different CD's when the overlay job is set up correctly to make a bar-in-bar type measurement. While in Figure 5d, the same alignment attribute will now produce a non-zero offset when set

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up (incorrectly) as a bar-in-box measurement. [Figure 5(b)]Figures 5(b1), 5(b2), 5(b3) and 5(b4) further [illustrates]illustrate this diminution error and how it might introduce overlay noise. For the example of frame-in-frame structures, an overlay tool or job deck that is not sensitive to these CD variations will measure only the programmed offsets from encoding scheme Example (3) described above and illustrated in Figures 5(a) and [5(b)]5(b1), 5(b2), 5(b3) and 5(b4). Therefore, if the overlay tool produces incorrect measurements in a pattern that matches our fourth encoding scheme the overlay job deck will have to be modified to account for the diminution effect.

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